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ABSTRACT

An investigation of a cognitive-perceptual model to measure adolescents' feelings of political alienation is reported. The model hypothesizes that fundamental to the political alienation process is a feared actual or potential loss of freedom; this process is called psychological reactance. The sample consisted of 460 senior high school students who responded to a self-administered questionnaire. Measures included political incapability, discontentment, cynicism, and estrangement scales. Results indicated that adolescents express feelings of both political sensitivity and political reactance. The feelings of political threat tended to appear among all adolescents surveyed regardless of their demographic characteristics. Also, it was confirmed that political sensitivity contributes to political reactance which in turn contributes to political alienation. Specifically, political threats which relate to future expectations of well-being and economic satisfaction were most prone to foster feelings of alienation. The reactance theory predicts that when freedom is perceived as threatened or lost, a person should strive to restore or protect it. However, according to the learned helplessness model (see SO 012630), the process terminates at the point of perceived loss of threat to freedom because adolescents have never expected to exert control over the sociopolitical system. This factor may explain the passivity of American youth over the past decade. (Author/KC)

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POLITICAL DISENCHANTMENT: A COGNITIVE-PERCEPTUAL THEORY OF POLITICAL ALIENATION

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, a cognitive-perceptual version of the political reality model of preadult political alienation is explicated and tested. Central to this model of political alienation antecedents is Brehm's theory of psychological reactance, which, it is suggested, is the basis of adolescents' feelings of political inefficacy, policy discontentment, political cynicism, and political estrangement. Using a random sample of 460 Evansville, Indiana high school students surveyed in May, 1975, the political threat-political alienation model underlying this research is confirmed. In addition, a two-step causal model, positing associations between a predilection for political sensitivity and political reactance, and between political reactance and political alienation is elaborated and supported. These findings are discussed within the context of a learned helplessness model as applied to political behavior.

POLITICAL DISENCHANTMENT: A COGNITIVE-PERCEPTUAL THEORY OF POLITICAL ALIENATION

"Don't worry," I have promised him in earnest. "I will never let anything bad happen to you."
He is afraid of the government, the army, the Pentagon, the police. (And so am I.)
"I won't ever let them hurt you or take you away."
And what is there, really, that I can do? Except nothing.
So I do nothing.[1]

In recent years, two explanations have been forwarded to account for the phenomenon of felt political alienation among preadults, both white and black.[2] The first of these models, the social deprivation explanation, suggests that perceptions of social deprivation generate feelings of low self-competence, which, in turn, foster feelings of political alienation. Conversely, the political reality explanation posits a direct relationship between perceptions of the sociopolitical system's functioning and feelings of political alienation, with such feelings resulting from perceptions of systemic discrimination on economic and racial grounds, social inequality, elite dominance, and undemocratic practices. Little empirical support has been found for the social deprivation explanation, whereas the political reality model has been supported.[3]

While the political reality model seems to provide a more powerful means of predicting feelings of political alienation among preadults, the perceptual-affective nexus inherent in the model still requires an adequate

theoretical base. Thus, the reasons for such perceptions of systemic functioning producing feelings of political alienation have not yet been specified. In this paper, one possible basis for this linkage will be outlined and subjected to empirical test. Fundamental to the political alienation process, it will be hypothesized, is a feared actual or potential loss of freedom, a psychological reactance process.[4] Therefore, it is argued, the more the individual perceives the sociopolitical system as encroaching on his life space, or actually threatening his way of life, the more that individual should exhibit feelings of political alienation, i.e., feelings of political inefficacy, policy discontentment, political cynicism, and political estrangement.

Brehm's theory of psychological reactance is basic to the model of political alienation antecedents presented here. Brehm writes, ". . . if a person's behavioral freedom is reduced or threatened with reduction, he will become motivationally aroused. This arousal will presumably be directed against any further loss of freedom and it would also be directed toward the re-establishment of whatever freedom has already been lost or threatened."[5] And, further, "the magnitude of reactance is a direct function of (1) the importance of the free behaviors which are eliminated or threatened, (2) the proportion of free behaviors eliminated or threatened, and (3) where there is only a threat of elimination of free behaviors, the magnitude of that threat."[6]

Two additional points, especially germane to political behavior, should be made regarding psychological reactance theory. First, a person need not experience an actual threat or reduction of his freedom to exhibit psychological reactance: "If the observer believes he has the freedom that he sees threatened or eliminated for another, the more he feels he could be

in the place of the other, the more reactance is aroused in him."[7] Furthermore, ". . . the observer must feel that he and the observed person are 'interchangeable'—that there are no differences in experience, status, power, and so on that imply that a threat to or elimination of the observed person's freedom does not apply to the observer's freedom."[8] Second, a person tends to generalize from threatened or eliminated freedoms to similar freedoms, at other times, in other circumstances:

> When a person sees a threat to, or elimination of one of his freedoms, it is probably not unusual for him to infer that some of his other freedoms are also threatened. To the extent that he makes such an inference, the magnitude of reactance tends to be greater than what would occur from the original threat or elimination. . . . In general, a single threat or elimination of freedom can imply the loss of the same freedom on other occasions or the loss of similar behavioral freedoms in the same or other situations.[9]

Assumptions intrinsic to the reactance model as applied to the political context must be noted. First, it must be assumed that individuals differ regarding their levels of psychological reactance, with some persons becoming psychologically aroused both prior to, and to a greater degree than, others. Somewhat related to this initial assumption is a second concerning the extent to which such a motivational state is politicized, i.e., takes on a "political" coloration and has "political" implications for the individual. It will be assumed here that the threshold for such a politicized reactance process also varies between individuals. As a process, therefore, political reactance occurs in two steps.

According to this model, two factors contribute to feelings of political alienation. First, the individual must be predisposed toward reactance, particularly in relationship to the operations of the sociopolitical system; he must possess a personal sensitivity to potential threats from the socio-

political sphere. This predilection should indirectly determine feelings of political alienation. At the same time, this sensitization should exert an even stronger effect on the person's more specific situational perceptions of political threat in the present. Thus, it is this stage of the reactance process which should have the greatest impact on feelings of political alienation. Both types of reactance, however, generalized sensitization and perceptions of imminent threat, should produce feelings of political alienation. Such feelings, in turn, should be conceptualized as the psychological means by which the individual attempts to cope with or compensate for this perceived systemic threat to personal well-being, present and future.

This model is a psychological variant of Abramson's political reality model of felt political alienation among black preadults. As with the political reality model, the political reactance model is more "political" in that it takes into account the operations of the sociopolitical system.[10] Furthermore, it does not make the psychopathological assumptions inherent in the social deprivation model, i.e., concerning perceptions of external locus of control and feelings of low self-esteem.[11] The political alienation concept is also conceptualized in a different manner than in the social deprivation model, with a volitional component being introduced.[12] In this instance, then, feelings of political alienation are more oriented to the functioning of the sociopolitical system, not to personal psychodynamic processes. As a result, political alienation tends to be viewed more as a process of active rejection, rather than as passive withdrawal.

In contrast to the political reality model, the political reactance model attempts to explain feelings of political alienation by means of a cognitive-perceptual process, whereby the individual's perceptions and

evaluations of the sociopolitical system are assumed to be relatively accurate, and whereby the individual ascertains the linkage between, and consequences of that linkage, the sociopolitical system and his life space through a conscious, relatively rational, process of cognition.[13] Furthermore, the political reactance model is held to apply to both preadults and adults, whites and blacks.

The central hypothesis underlying the reactance model of political alienation which will be tested in this paper is that there exists a direct positive relationship between levels of psychological reactance and levels of felt political alienation among preadults. In testing this model, five objectives have been set. First, the development of two political versions of psychological reactance indicators will be outlined. Second, preadults' responses to these indicators will be presented. Third, the influence of demographic variables on these indicators will be investigated. Fourth, the intercorrelations between the psychological reactance and political alienation measures will be reported. Last, the two-step causal model of reactance will be tested.

Sample. Data for this research were gathered through the use of a written self-administered questionnaire, which was completed by a random sample of 460 senior high school students in Evansville, Indiana in May 1975. This sample was composed of 48 percent males and 52 percent females, of whom the majority, 91 percent, were white. Of these students, 15 percent reported having grade-point-averages of A, 47 percent reported GPAs of B, and 38 percent reported GPAs of C or below. Thirty-one percent of their parents had less than twelve years of formal education, 38 percent were high school

graduates, 12 percent had attended college, and 20 percent of their parents were college graduates.

Attitudinal Measures. The dependent variable in this study, felt political alienation, was operationalized using four attitudinal scales, which exhibited a mean interscale correlation of 0.62. The first of these, Olsen's political incapability scale,[14] was utilized to measure feelings of political inefficacy: (1) I believe public officials don't care much what people like me and my parents think; (2) There is no way other than voting that people like me and my parents can influence actions of the government; (3) Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that I can't really understand what's going on; and (4) People like me and my parents don't have any say about what the government does. This scale manifests a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.49.

Olsen's political discontentment scale,[15] exhibiting an Alpha coefficient of 0.58, was used to operationalize the policy discontentment concept: (1) As the government is now organized and operated, I think it is hopelessly incapable of dealing with all the crucial problems facing the country today; (2) It seems to me that the government often fails to take necessary actions on important matters, even when people favor such actions; (3) These days the government is trying to do too many things, including some activities that I don't think it has the right to do; and (4) For the most part, the government serves the interests of a few organized groups, such as business or labor, and isn't very concerned about the needs of people like my parents and me.

The third dimension of the political alienation indicator was measured

by means of the political cynicism scale of Agger, et al.,[16] which attained a reliability coefficient of 0.50. This indicator was comprised of six items: (1) Money is the most important factor influencing public policies; (2) Politicians represent the general interest more frequently than they represent special interests (Reflected); (3) In order to get nominated, most candidates for political office have to make basic compromises and undesirable commitments; (4) Politicians spend most of their time getting reelected or reappointed; and (5) A large number of city and county politicians are political hacks.

The political estrangement scale,[17] with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.64, was composed of the following items: (1) When I think about government and politics in the United States, I consider myself an outsider; (2) I tend to identify myself with and feel closely associated with American politics and government (Reflected); (3) When I hear or read about the politics and governmental system of the United States, I feel that I am a part of that system (Reflected); and (4) When I think about the government in Washington, I don't feel as if it's my government.

Two scales were utilized in operationalizing the independent variable. The first, the political sensitivity scale, was constructed to measure psychological reactance threaholds, while the second scale, the political reactance scale, was designed to measure perceptions of imminent political threat. Tables 1 and 2 contain two types of data pertinent to these scales, the adolescents' mean responses to each scale item and item-scale intercorrelations, corrected for overlap, for each item. The political sensitivity scale registered a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.66; for the political reactance scale, a coefficient of 0.70 was achieved.

When corrected for attenuation, these two measures exhibit an interscale correlation of 0.36.

As the data in Tables 1 and 2 indicate, these adolescents tend to evince greater political sensitivity than actual political reactance, although on both scales they clearly register agreement with the items. With mean scale totals of 44.74 and 35.93, respectively, the political sensitivity and political reactance scales, having a response range of 9 to 54, again, show that these adolescents do exhibit feelings of political threat.

Results. One important question relevant to these two measures concerns the effects of demographic variables on the degree of sensitivity and reactance found. As a means of exploring this question, five categoric-demographic variables were regressed onto each of the scales. The results of this regression analysis, appearing in Table 3, show that school grade level and grade-point-average exert the most influence in this regard, but only on the political sensitivity measure, and with only negligible results. Interestingly, however, sensitivity increases with formal education among these high school students, and also increases with grade-point-average. suggesting that the more informed these adolescents are, the more they are prone to sensitization regarding the potential impact of the sociopolitical system on their personal lives. To a lesser extent, political sensitivity also correlates positively with parental education level and is higher among white, compared to black, students. These five variables, though, account for only 14 percent of the variance in the political sensitivity measure and have almost no impact whatsoever on the political reactance

TABLE 1. ITEM-SCALE CORRELATIONS AND MEAN ITEM RESPONSES FOR THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY SCALE

	r	M*
If the government wouldn't allow newspapers to print whatever they wished, I would be very disturbed.	0.31	4.73
I would feel very threatened if the government prohibited me from reading certain books or watching certain television programs.	0.25	5.42
If the government wouldn't permit me to vote in elections, I would be very angry.	0.39	4.82
If the government denied me the right to live where I pleased, I don't think I'd be too concerned. (Reflected)	0.32	1.68
I would be very upset if the government denied me the right of free speech.	0.35	5.32
I really don't think I'd be too concerned if the government made it illegal for people to criticize our political leaders. (Reflected)	0.37	2.23
I can't imagine getting upset over not being permitted by the government to support a particular political party in an election. (Reflected)	0.39	2.76
I would not be particularly disturbed if the government prohibited me from seeking certain kinds of employment. (Reflected)	0.30	2.20
I would feel very frustrated if the government wouldn't allow me to associate with or talk to certain people.	0.34	5.12

* 1=Disagree Strongly 2=Disagree 3=Disagree Somewhat 4=Agree Somewhat 5=Agree 6=Agree Strongly

TABLE 2. ITEM-SCALE CORRELATIONS AND MEAN ITEM RESPONSES FOR THE POLITICAL REACTANCE SCALE

	r	M*
The way our leaders are running the country these days, I really feel threatened.	0.46	3.91
Sometimes I feel that the poor political leadership we've had in this country recently is going to somehow threaten the kind of life I'd like to live.	0.47	4.47
I'm not going to be able to live the kind of life I'd like to live because of the way this country is being run.	0.52	3.65
I'm not as free to do some of the things I'd like to do because of the political situation in this country today.	0.48	3.59
I feel personally threatened when I hear how our government is managing the economy these days.	0.46	4.10
I really don't see how the government could influence my life in any way. (Reflected)	0.04	2.47
I don't view the government as a threat to my personal freedom. (Reflected)	0.37	3.76
With the recent wiretapping and spying activities of the government coming to light, it's obvious that the personal privacy of all of us is threatened.	0.30	4.18
Because of the government's handling of our economy, a lot of students like me won't be able to get jobs when they graduate.	0.31	4.35

* 1=Disagree Strongly
2=Disagree
3=Disagree Somewhat
4=Agree Somewhat
5=Agree
6=Agree Strongly

TABLE 3. DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES REGRESSED (BETAS) ON POLITICAL SENSITIVITY AND POLITICAL REACTANCE SCALES

	Political Sensitivity	Political Reactance
Parental Education Level	0.14	-0.12
Grade-Point-Average	0.23	-0.08
Sex	0.01	-0.07
Grade Level	0.24	0.01
Race	-0.16	0.03
(r^2)	0.14	0.03

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NOTE:

measure.

The major hypothesis to be tested in this paper posits a positive association between the perceived political threat indicators and feelings of political alienation, with political reactance having the greatest affect on feelings of political alienation, relative to the political sensitivity measure. The correlations in Table 4 provide empirical support for this hypothesis. Equally as important, this hypothesized relationship pertains even when individual and simultaneous controls are introduced for possible demographic effects.

A number of noteworthy relationships appear in Table 4. First, it is interesting that even though political sensitivity does not reveal the comparatively strong correlations with the political alienation measures that political reactance does, the former indicator does correlate with policy discontentment and political cynicism. Conversely, the political reactance measure is associated with all four political alienation dimensions, especially, though, policy discontentment. It is also significant that, of the four political alienation dimensions investigated, feelings of political estrangement appear least affected by perceptions of political reactance; similarly, feelings of political inefficacy are less influenced by such threatening perceptions. These bivariate correlations, therefore, provide relatively strong support for the expected perceived threat-felt alienation linkage.

Inasmuch as two completely new indicators are being employed as measures of the political threat concept, it may be of heuristic value to explore the specific perceptions of threat which elicit feelings of political alienation. The step-wise multiple regression analysis results in

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TABLE 4. ZERO ORDER AND PARTIAL CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE POLITICAL THREAT AND POLITICAL ALIENATION SCALES

	Political Inefficacy	Policy Discontentment	Political Cynicism	Political Estrangement	Political Alienation Composite Indicator
Political Sensitivity	-0.08	0.21	0.32	-0.08	0.13
Controls: SES	-0.06	0.22	0.34	-0.07	0.15
GPA	-0.05	0.22	0.34	-0.06	0.16
Sex	-0.08	0.22	0.34	-0.08	0.13
Grade	-0.06	0.22	0.31	-0.06	0.14
Race	-0.09	0.21	0.30	-0.08	0.12
All variables	0.00	0.25	0.33	-0.02	0.19
Political Reactance	0.37	0.58	0.46	0.30	0.58
Controls: SES	0.36	0.58	0.45	0.29	0.57
GPA	0.36	0.58	0.45	0.29	0.57
Sex	0.37	0.57	0.45	0.30	0.58
Grade	0.38	0.58	0.45	0.31	0.58
Race	0.37	0.58	0.46	0.30	0.58
All Variables	0.36	0.58	0.45	0.30	0.57
Political Threat Composite Indicator	0.19	0.50	0.49	0.14	0.45
Controls: SES	0.19	0.50	0.50	0.15	0.46
GPA	0.20	0.50	0.50	0.15	0.46
Sex	0.19	0.50	0.50	0.14	0.45
Grade	0.21	0.51	0.48	0.16	0.46
Race	0.19	0.51	0.48	0.15	0.45
All variables	0.24	0.52	0.48	0.18	0.48

NOTE: r= 0.08, p= 0.05.

Tables 5 and 6 provide this information. Thus, in considering political sensitivity as an antecedent of political alienation, it appears that freedom of speech, association, information, and partisanship are the most valued--and possibly the most jeopardized--according to the adolescents' responses. On the other hand, the political reactance dimensions most prone to affect feelings of political alienation seem to be those relevant to the overall calibre of our political leadership, diminished employment opportunities, perceptions of curtailed quality of life, and governmental violations of individuals' privacy.

In order to fully test the reactance model of political alienation developed in this paper, path analytic procedures will be utilized. This model suggests that perceptions of political threat might be best conceptualized as a two-step process in which tendencies toward political sensitivity contribute toward a predilection for political reactance, which ultimately engenders feelings of political alienation. This model is pictured in Figure 1, where the beta weights confirm these expectations. Thus, political sensitivity, while having an impact on political reactance, has almost no direct effect on feelings of political alienation. And political reactance has a substantial effect on felt political alienation among these adolescents, accounting for 32 percent of the explained variance.

Conclusion. Four particularly important findings have emerged from this study on Evansville, Indiana adolescents. First, these adolescents express feelings of both political sensitivity and political reactance. Second, these feelings of political threat tend to appear among all the adolescents surveyed regardless of their demographic-categoric attributes, with a slight

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TABLE 5. POLITICAL SENSITIVITY SCALE ITEMS REGRESSED (BETAS) ON POLITICAL ALIENATION COMPOSITE INDICATOR

	Political Alienation Composite Indicator
I would be very upset if the government denied me the right of free speech.	0.15
I would feel very frustrated if the government wouldn't allow me to associate with or talk to certain people.	0.10
I would feel very threatened if the government prohibited me from reading certain books or watching certain television programs.	0.10
I can't imagine getting upset over not being permitted by the government to support a particular political party in an election.	0.10
I would not be particularly disturbed if the government prohibited me from seeking certain kinds of employment.	-0.09
I really don't think I'd be too concerned if the government made it illegal for people to criticize our political leaders.	-0.09
If the government wouldn't permit me to vote in elections, I would be very angry.	-0.05
If the government wouldn't allow newspapers to print whatever they wished, I would be very disturbed.	-0.04
If the government denied me the right to live where I pleased, I don't think I'd be too concerned.	0.03
(r^2)	0.08

NOTE:

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TABLE 6. POLITICAL REACTANCE SCALE ITEMS REGRESSED (BETAS) ON POLITICAL ALIENATION COMPOSITE INDICATOR

	Political Alienation Composite Indicator
The way our leaders are running the country these days, I really feel threatened.	0.15
Because of the government's handling of our economy, a lot of students like me won't be able to get jobs when they graduate.	0.14
Sometimes I feel that the poor political leadership we've had in this country recently is going to somehow threaten the kind of life I'd like to live.	0.12
With the recent wiretapping and spying activities of the government coming to light, it's obvious that the personal privacy of all of us is threatened.	0.16
I'm not going to be able to live the kind of life I'd like to live because of the way this country is being run.	0.12
I feel personally threatened when I hear how our government is managing the economy these days.	0.09
I'm not as free to do some of the things I'd like to do because of the political situation in this country today.	0.03
I really don't see how the government could influence my life in any way.	0.01
I don't view the government as a threat to my personal freedom.	0.00
(r^2)	0.28

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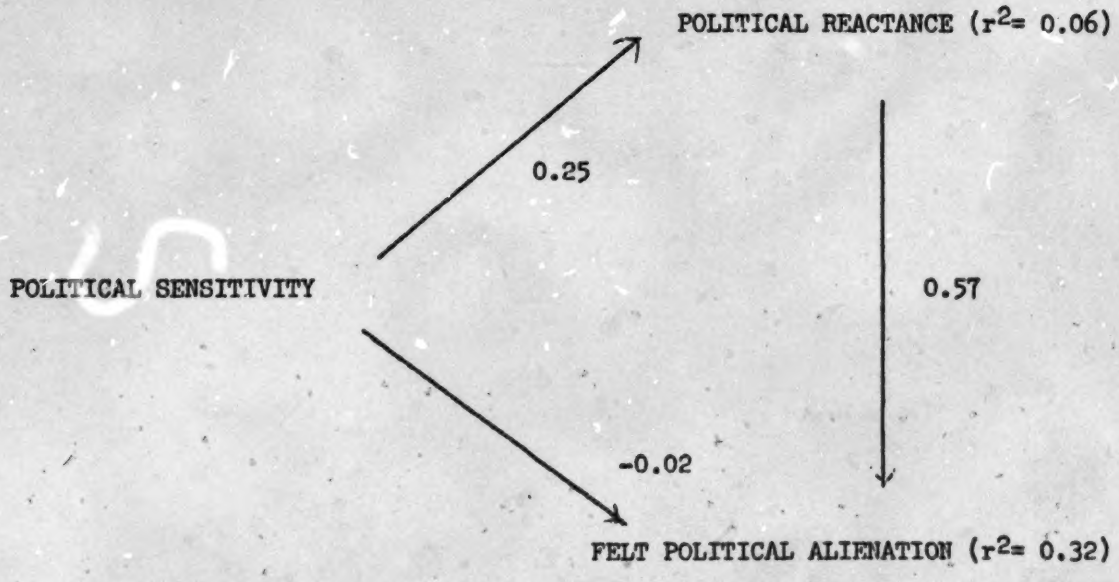
NOTE:

FIGURE 1. PATH MODEL OF FELT POLITICAL ALIENATION ANTECEDENTS



NOTE:

tendency for such feelings to increase with socioeconomic status, grade level, and grade-point-average. Third, the model of political alienation antecedents tested was confirmed; political sensitivity was found to contribute to political reactance, and political reactance contributed to political alienation. Last, in investigating the specific sources of political threat affecting feelings of political alienation, it was discovered that political threats which related to expectations of future well-being and economic satisfaction were most prone to foster feelings of political alienation.

While these findings presented here are significant in their own right, their implications are even more important. Especially important here are the theoretical ramifications of reactance theory as they relate to political behavior. The theory, for instance, would predict that these adolescents, since they manifest feelings of psychological reactance, should not only be motivationally aroused, but should also strive to restore or protect their lost or threatened freedom. While the data presented do not directly address this point, it is not altogether clear how an individual, especially an adolescent, should behave in order to secure his freedom when he perceives that it is being jeopardized by the actions of the sociopolitical system. This point leads to the introduction of a second model to explicate the consequences of political reactance, the learned helplessness model.[18] According to Wortman and Brehm, this latter model can be distinguished from the reactance model in a number of ways:

> Reactance theory predicts that people will be motivated by loss of control to renew attempts at mastery. The learned helplessness model suggests that active problem solving will be impaired after exposure to uncontrolled outcomes. Reactance theory leads to the prediction that individuals will react to loss of control by becoming hostile and

> aggressive toward the agents that are restricting their freedom; the learned helplessness model predicts that organisms exposed to uncontrollable outcomes will become passive. According to reactance theory, a person's evaluation of an outcome is likely to be affected by his inability to exert control over it. If he is forced to endure an outcome that he wouldn't ordinarily choose, he will evaluate the outcome negatively; if his freedom to engage in a certain option is eliminated, he will rate that option more positively. The learned helplessness model predicts no changes in evaluation of the outcome, although differential evaluations of controllable and uncontrollable outcomes are not inconsistent with the model. Finally, reactance theory is formulated in terms of specific freedoms. The theory is not concerned with general feelings of control, but rather control over particular outcomes. An assumption of the theory is that each person has a set of behaviors that he feels free to engage in. If his freedom to perform one or more of these behaviors is threatened, he will attempt to restore his freedom by engaging in behaviors that imply that he is free to do as he pleases with respect to the specific freedom in question. In contrast, the learned helplessness model leads to the prediction that repeated exposure to uncontrollable outcomes results in learning that one cannot control reinforcement.[19]

These two models can be brought to bear on political behavior, however. As Wortman and Brehm note, "theoretically, reactance should occur only under a specified set of conditions. Subjects who are exposed to uncontrollable outcomes should experience reactance only if they expected to have some control over the outcomes, and then only to the extent that the outcomes are important."[20]

As applied to the political socialization process, this integration of the reactance and learned helplessness models suggests that the initial condition specified, expectations of control, may account for the relative passivity of these adolescents.[21] While they perceive potential or actual loss of freedom and express feelings of political alienation as a result, the motivational or arousal process terminates at this point because they have never expected to exert control over the many facets of the socio-political system, no matter what they have been taught in their secondary

school social studies courses.[22] This factor may also explain the relative levels of inactivity among youth during the past decade; even when activism was most strident and being subjected to national media coverage, the majority of American youth remained passive, perhaps because they had gotten the message: the system cannot be changed.[23]

Are such perceptions of threat and loss of freedom realistic? Some evidence in the psychological literature indicates that individuals lacking intellectual resources and sophistication are more prone to appraise situations as threatening when such appraisals are unwarranted.[24] Writing on this point, Lazarus concludes that

> Although level of sophistication does appear, logically, to be nondirectional in its influence on threat appraisal, in general, lack of intellectual resources should increase the prospects of incorrect evaluations of the situation. Moreover, there should be some inbalance in the direction of more unwarranted threat appraisal in the less adequate person, since the dull individual has fewer resources with which to cope with threat and probably less self-confidence in his ability to master danger when it arises.[25]

While the data relating to this point are rather limited in the present study, it is of interest that both the demographic and personality correlates of the political threat indicators, especially the political sensitivity measure, do not conform to Lazarus' conclusion. The two strongest demographic correlates of political sensitivity, for example, were high grade level and high grade-point-average. Furthermore, a composite personality indicator, tapping self-esteem and external locus of control dimensions, was found to be uncorrelated with a composite political threat indicator ($r = 0.05$, $p = 0.20$). Thus, perceptions of political threat tend to be more common among adolescents in this study who have had more formal schooling and who have earned higher

grades, and, equally important, level of self-esteem and external locus of control belief is not related to such perceptions.

This, then, is the underside of the coin originally investigated by Greenstein.[26] Whereas, the young child initially views the system as being characterized by warmth and benevolence, it would appear that, as he matures and gains political sophistication, he is more prone to view the system as possessing threatening qualities as well, qualities which may deprive him of fundamental freedoms and which may deter him from leading the life he wishes to live.

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